

Harry Norman John GIBSON

Born Wolborough, Newton, 3 November 1897
Aircraftsman, 2nd CI F 14744

Died Greece, 27 May 1917, aged 19
Royal Naval Air Service

Harry Jennings Gibson (1867-1940) was born in Kenwyn, Truro, and became a railway clerk working in Truro for the Great Western Railway. He married Edith Mary Wills (1867-1933) in Truro in 1888.

In 1891 they lived at 11 Dominic Street, Kenwyn, Truro with their first child, Hilda Mary (1889-1896) who died aged 7.

They were in Plymouth in 1901, living at 23 Oxford Avenue, St Pancras and they had two sons, Frederick James (1891-) and **Harry Norman John** (1897-1917). They were both to enlist and serve in WW1.

By 1911 Harry Jennings Gibson had moved to become Station Master, Great Western Railway, Dawlish and he and his wife Edith Mary had moved to 3 San Remo Terrace, Dawlish with **Harry Norman John Gibson**, 13, a scholar, and mother-in-law and widow Mary Toms Wills, 73. It appears that Frederick James Gibson may have already started working for the Great Western Railway as a railway clerk.

Frederick James Gibson enlisted in November 1915 and was discharged from hospital in 1919. He gave his address as 49 Cowper Road, Hanwell, Middx. He was beneficiary on his father's death in 1940.

Harry Norman John Gibson joined the Royal Naval Air Service (R.N.A.S.) on the 20th May 1916 "for service in land operations". He was on the books of *H.M.S. PRESIDENT II* in Yarmouth from May until 17th November when he was based at Crystal Palace for a month before transferring to the Eastern Mediterranean until his death on 27 May 1917.

The role of an aircraftsman was akin to that of labourer in civilian life. There was no specialised skill such as was required to service machinery, but he was instructed in many different tasks in servicing, refuelling, loading aircraft for action in the air. Bomb loading was most likely one of those tasks.

His naval service record shows that death was by "accidental bomb explosion". The report in the *Dawlish Gazette* (See Documents, below) says that his death occurred 'on Whit-Sunday by the accidental explosion of bombs.'

He appears to have been based at R.N.A.S. MUDROS, Greece. "2 Wing were established at Imbros (Kephalo Point) on 31/8/15. The Wing was evacuated from Imbros on 18/1/16, absorbing 3 Wing on the same date. The Wing was based at Mudros by May 1916, remaining there until disbanded on the 1/4/18, and becoming 62 Wing and 63 Wing RAF."

(*invisionzone.com*)

Mudros comprised a small Greek port on the Mediterranean island of Lemnos. It gained wartime significance with the determination of the Allies - chiefly the British and largely through the enthusiasm of Winston Churchill - in the early part of 1915 to attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles Straits, some 50km away. Once the Gallipoli campaign was called off, in evident failure at the close of 1915, Mudros' importance receded, although it remained the Allied base for the blockade of the Dardanelles for the duration of the war.

It was a principal base during the Salonika campaign in Greece. Operations were conducted to drive back attacks on Thessalonika (Salonika).

Dawlish World War One Project

(Aristidis Moraitinis went on to fly and fight during World War I. He became a licensed pilot, and at the end of 1916, he assumed command of the Greek Naval Flight on Thasos, operating with No. 2 Wing, Royal Naval Air Service. After Greece formally entered the war on the Allied side in June 1917, Moraitinis commanded Independent Naval Flight H2 at Mudros.)

The Royal Naval Air Service was officially recognised on July 1, 1914 by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill. The new service was completely separate from the Royal Flying Corps except for the Central Flying School, which was still used, and became in effect a rival air force. On April 1, 1918 the RNAS was merged with the RFC to form the RAF. At the time of the merger, the Navy's air service had 67,000 officers and men, 2,949 aircraft, 103 airships and 126 coastal stations.

H.N.J.GIBSON is shown on the Devon Roll of Honour but date & place of death are empty.

Commonwealth War Graves entry:

GIBSON, HARRY NORMAN JOHN Air Mechanic 2nd Class F/14744 27/05/1917

Age: 19 Royal Naval Air Service, "F" Sqdn. 2nd Wing. H.M.S. "President II."

Grave Ref: II. H. 5. [Struma Military Cemetery](#), Kalokostron, Greece.

Son of Harry Jennings Gibson and Edith Mary Gibson, of 3, San Remo Terrace, Dawlish, Devon. (The Struma River flows through Bulgaria southward to the Greek frontier, then south-east into the Aegean Sea. From the Allied base at Salonika, a road ran north-east across the river to Seres, and it was this road that the right wing of the Allied army used for the movements of troops and supplies to the Struma front during the Salonika Campaign.)

In the autumn of 1916, the 40th Casualty Clearing Station was established not far from the road near the 71 Kilometre stone and the cemetery made for it was originally called Kilo 71 Military Cemetery.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: GIBSON H.N.J. AIRCRT R.A.F. *(By the time that the War Memorial was in place the RNAS had become part of the RAF -ed)*

Devon Heritage site info: F/14744 Air Mechanic 2nd Class Harry Norman J. Gibson, of "F" Squadron, 2nd Wing, H.M.S.PRESIDENT II. Son of Henry Jennings Gibson and Edith Mary Gibson, of 3, San Remo (Terrace), Dawlish, Born in Dawlish in the December Quarter of 1897. Died 27 May 1917, aged 19.

Last known address: 3 San Remo Terrace, Dawlish.

Next of kin: Harry Jennings Gibson, father

References:

naval-history.net

First World War.com

Free Birth Marriage Death records

CWGC website

Refs via subscription site, Ancestry

Census data

UK RN & RM Graves Roll

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